PARMENIDES

and the History of Dialectic: Three Essays

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one ought to apologize for offering a second study of Parmenides. But this is, I hope, the book I should have written the first time. It is, at least, shorter. And Parmenides himself is well worth returning to even twice in a lifetime, and perhaps at the expense of other activities in life. Or so, I hope, a sympathetic reader will agree. Much of what we think we owe to the Enlightenment or to the Academy is originally Eleatic, and it is possible that further rummaging around among those philosophers whom Nietzsche called "the most deeply buried of all Greek temples"[1] will inform us more about the sources of our own heritage.

This study has as its broadest aim a rethinking of Parmenides' effect on Plato, and has benefited from fine recent work by Coxon and Palmer.[2] But, unlike these studies, whose primary aim is to find Plato reacting to Parmenides' content, the present attempt is almost entirely about the form

[1] *The Will to Power*, aphorism 419 (translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (London: Lowe & Brydone, Ltd., 1967)), p. 225.
[2] See A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986), and *The Philosophy of Forms* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999) and also John R. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford, 1999).

of his argument, its original significance, and its possible contributions to the study of Platonic dialectic. I thus offer three sections: one about Parmenides' own text in relation to Plato's dialogue *Parmenides;* one about Parmenides as a philosopher in his own right; and one about an area in which I will never know enough—the effect on subsequent dialectic of the *Parmenides* up through Hegel and beyond. If the present study succeeds, we will have pushed the history of formal dialectic, taken in some suitably broad sense, back to Parmenides himself in some quite specific ways. (I shall have to leave to others the story of the rest of ancient Greek dialectic, of other Presocratics, including Zeno, and of dialectic between Plato and Proclus.) The reader will see that I have adopted a relaxed attitude towards philosophical method; the first essay is textual, the second Anglo-American in style, the third Continental and historical, the conclusion—I hope—merely Parmenidean.

More specifically: the first essay attempts to find a pattern in Parmenides' use of positive and negative terms, as well as modal metaphors, in such a way that the poem turns out to be a group of all the types of things that can be said, in a positive and negative catalog or lexicon of the intelligible world. The pattern of this arrangement is then mapped in definite ways onto the similar catalog of positives and negatives in Plato's *Parmenides,* with the object of showing both authors forth as employers of the same method. The second essay proposes a new starting-point for our readings—the actual discourse in fragment 8 about Truth rather than the fearsomely elliptical and ambiguous heralding of the two routes in fragment 2—and goes on to discuss, in Anglo-American

style, topics like self-referential inconsistency, monism and pluralism, the relationship between thought, language, and reality, and the nature of truth. The third essay, returning to some extent to the broader historical sweep of the first essay, attempts to go forward from the *Parmenides* to later landmarks of dialectic like Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Aquinas' relational Trinity, Hegel, and Derrida, reading the later authors, in relation to their Eleatic heritage, as continuing it or departing from it. The three essays as a sequence, then, attempt to read backwards from Plato to Parmenides in quest of a single method which might properly be called dialectical, then forward to contemporary horizons through issues both timelessly metaphysical and historically argumentative.

My offering also has a quite narrow aim. For one of the effects of twentieth-century philosophy, both Anglo-American and Continental, has been to tease apart what is in fact an Eleatic legacy, though this effect has often been known as an attack on Hegel, on the Enlightenment, on traditional metaphysics, and so on. What was the Eleatic legacy, in method, in substance? How was it subsequently modified, perhaps oversimplified? How deep did the twentieth-century criticisms (to group them all together for a moment) succeed in going? And what remains for us to do, whether critically or constructively? Here, of course, a single group of essays could do no more than make a few suggestions. So, again, as I did in my first study, I invoke the indulgence of a well-disposed reader. For no study, however carried out, could pretend to authority in such matters. And it is by no means clear in what direction this already-cloudy new century is going to go.

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ESSAY ONE

■

PARMENIDEAN DIALECTIC

I have often wondered whether there could be some useful way of mapping the sequence of positives and negatives in Parmenides' poem onto the sequence of positives and negatives in Plato's *Parmenides*, a way of comparing the logical skeletons of the two works. There would be two parts to this task: first, showing that there is in fact some such sequence in the poem; second, performing the mapping. Indeed, if the second half of the dialogue has something to do with an enterprise which would rescue the Platonic Forms from the objections raised in the first half, and which would then show how something like a dialectical or gymnastic method could work in educational practice, it would be highly interesting both historically and philosophically if such an enterprise had Eleatic antecedents, as the name given to the dialogue might be thought to suggest.

That there is negative language in Fragment 8, the so-called 'Truth-section' of Parmenides' poem, does not need to be pointed out, if by 'negative language' one means (in some suitably broad sense) denials, proof by contraposition, alpha-privative predicate adjectives, or just negative verbs (leaving aside for a moment the question of what the Parmenidean

esti and *einai* meant and of whether some of the language was meant to be self-referentially inconsistent).[3] But there are further questions. Parmenides both asserts and denies both positive and alpha-privative predicates and/or verbs: *tetelesmenon* and *agenēton* are asserted while *epideues* and *ateleutēton* are denied. But is there a pattern to these assertions and denials? Do they occur in different ways in different parts of the poem? What hints about Parmenides' philosophical views could such strategic proof-devices give us? Did he have a conception of language and argument in which the difference between positives and privatives was relevant to his conception of the various routes of inquiry?

We can begin taking another look at Parmenidean language by noticing that the first section of the poem, lines 6–21, is largely concerned with denying things: *gignesthai (genesthai)* and *ollusthai*, *genesis* and *olethros*, are denied, and so

[3] For a very few representative specimens of interpretations of different types, see G.E.L. Owen, "Eleatic Questions," *Classical Quarterly* 10 (1960) 84–102 (reprinted with revisions in R.E. Allen and D. Furley, eds., *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, vol. II, pp. 48–81); Montgomery Furth, "Elements of Eleatic Ontology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1968) 111–32 (reprinted in A.P.D. Mourelatos, ed., *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974, pp. 241–70)); Charles H. Kahn, "The Thesis of Parmenides," *Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1968/69) 700–24 and "Being in Parmenides and Plato," *La Parola del Passato* 43 (1988) 237–61 as well as "Greek Philosophy From the Beginning to Plato: A Critical Notice of C.C.W. Taylor, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy*," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999) 325–42; Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven: Yale, 1970); Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (2 vols.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986); Pierre Aubenque, *Études sur Parménide, vol. II: Problèmes d'interprétation* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1987).

are *ēn* and *estai*. Justice did not allow them, releasing her bonds, but holds (line 15). The first three lines of the second section, lines 22–25, where *diaireton*, *mallon*, and *cheiroteron* are denied in opposition to the affirmed *pan homoion* and *pan empleon eontos*, seem to involve a mixture of affirmation and denial. The only assertions besides *echei* and *estin* in 6–21 are the predicates of the routes, not of being, in 17–18. Here are some questions I intend to pass over: (i) where do lines 5–6 belong in the argument? (The first part of line 5 seems to belong with the first section, and looks forward to the vocabulary of line 20, but the second part of the line seems to look forward to lines 23 and 25.) I pass over the question of time, timelessness, and eternity in Parmenides.[4] (ii) Does line 22 introduce a new subject, that of place and mass, or does it continue the discourse on temporal issues which began in 6–21? Here there is controversy, but it does not affect the point that the main job of 6–21 (and part of 22–25) is that of denying things: coming-to-be, perishing, the past and the future, inhomogeneity.[5]

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[4] See William Kneale, "Time and Eternity in Theology," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* n.s. 61 (1960/61) 90; G.E.L. Owen, "Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present," *The Monist* 50 (1966) 317–50, reprinted in A.P.D. Mourelatos, ed., *The Pre-Socratics* (see note 1), pp. 271–92; Malcolm Schofield, "Did Parmenides Discover Eternity?" *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 52 (1970) 113–35; P.B. Manchester, "Parmenides and the Need for Eternity," *The Monist* 62 (1979) 81–106; Leonardo Tarán, "Perpetual Present and Atemporal Eternity in Parmenides and Plato," *The Monist* 62 (1979) 43–53; D. O'Brien, "Temps et intemporalité chez Parménide," *Études philosophiques* 35 (1980) 257–72.

[5] See Owen, "Eleatic Questions," (note 1, p. 66); Enrico Berti in Jacques Brunschwig and G.E.R. Lloyd, eds., *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 666; Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space, & Motion* (London, 1988).

To resume the look at the text: the language then switches from a mixed mode to a mainly affirmative mode in lines 25–31 and, by the time that we get to *akinēton*, we are surely denying the motion of a mass in place, at least metaphorically. (I pass over another important issue, which is whether this language, here or later, is meant metaphorically or not.)[6] Just as we had a triple denial in 22–25, which ruled out *diaireton-mallon-cheiroteron*, we now have two affirmations which are triple, one privative *(akinēton-anarchon-apauston)* and one positive *(tauton . . . en tauōi . . . kath'hēauto)*, with its triple repetition of the *auto*-stem. The only denial in these lines (25–31) is, again, a repetition of the denial of coming-to-be and perishing. But now, instead of merely failing to allow them, as did Justice in 14–15, True Trust actively drove them off (*apōse*, 28), and her action in doing so is connected, with *epei* in 27, with the triple privative in the immediately preceding lines. Thus true trust, in denying two positive terms, also affirms three privatives. So two things are going on in 25–30: first, the modal prohibition intensifies its force and becomes active instead of passive; second, the language in which things are said of Being now comes to be largely affirmative instead of mainly consisting in denials. The reason why Being remains the same and in the same place is then associated with Necessity, in 30–32. This modal personification operates on what is within the bound instead of driving something away, as

[6] David Sedley, in A.A. Long, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1999), Ch. 6, pp. 117–22; A.H. Coxon, *Fragments* (see note 1), pp. 22–25.

did True Trust, or refusing to let something in, as did Justice. The action here supports two things: with *gar* (30), it supports the triple positive in the immediately preceding lines; and with *houneken* (32), it supports the denial of a privative in the line following. *Ateleutēton* is denied in 32, and its contradictory, *tetelesmenon*, is affirmed later on, in 42, once the picture of the bound is complete, Parmenides using the conjunction of the two, I think, to draw our attention to the fact that double-negative and positive are equivalent here. As we can tell from the immediately following denial of *epideues* in the next line (33), *ateleutēton* here means failure to reach up to the bound from inside. *Moira*, on the other hand, in lines 36–38, seems to have to do with failure to allow egress; it does not allow an other to emerge from Being because this would make Being fail to be *oulon* and *akinēton*. (Presumably this is because there would be two wholes and because the budding off of the second being would be a *kinēsis*.) Thus, while the expression *ou themis estin* in 32 is associated with the denial of a privative expressing failure to reach up to the bound, Doom—double-negating both a positive and a privative—does not allow the bound to be transgressed from *inside*.

And so we have many types of discourse thus far: (i) the denials of positives, associated with a lack of modal permission (8–21); (ii) denied positives refused by affirmed positives (22–25); (iii) affirmed privatives supported by denied positives, associated with a positive modal prohibition; (iv) affirmed positives, associated with modal necessity (29–31); (v) the denial of a privative (32); (vi) double-negation of both positive and privative (36–38). And here there is a certain completeness. One

can either affirm or deny, and what is accepted or rejected can be either positive or privative. Similarly, modally speaking, one can either fail to accept what is denied, or one can positively reject it; and what is affirmed can be either required or cannot fail to occur, this last also a kind of double negative. I have not managed to find a place in this picture for the *apesbestai* in line 21, except to note that it is not associated with a female figure, and, of course, that it, too, works against coming-to-be and perishing.

The style and rhetoric in these passages bring out the logical differences between the four types of affirmation and denial. Coming-to-be and perishing are dyadically opposed in 13–14, in 19–21, and in 27, just as past and future being are opposed in 20. Thus the dyadic rejection occurs three times. So do the triadic arrangements, with positives in 22–25, privatives in 26–27, and positives again in 29. Only then is the doubly-negative rejection of "incomplete" allowed to stand for a moment in 32 before it lapses into the "complete" of 42.

I want to make the case, though, that, coming from Parmenides, all this must be more than just rhetoric, as the connection between double-negative and positive makes clear for us. Consider also the connection between "immovable" (20) and "the same, remaining in the same place" (29); they are positive and privative ways of saying the same thing—Being does not escape the bound, it does not move out of its own place, it is in the same, in its place, in itself. The triple privative and the triple repetition of the *auto*-stem are ways of underlining this identity of content.

Consider also again the fact that the logically possible

bases are all covered. A Parmenides whose distinction between the two routes was that between positive and negative must have known this, and why it was so. Over and above semantic considerations and those having to do with proof (you cannot prove that Being is the same if it can at any moment undergo destruction), and over and above rhetoric, there must have been the intention to signal the fact that these were the only possibilities. And this would have involved at least an elementary theory of predication in its relation to affirmation and denial.

It is not necessary to take a stand, in order to see this, on the much-discussed question of what *estin* and *ouk estin* may mean in fragment 2. Even if we can deduce all the signposts from, say, affirmations of total existence, it still remains the case that, as David Sedley has also recently maintained,[7] *esti* is used to affirm predicates in fragment 8, along with substitutes like *pelenai* (21) and *menei* (29), directly of Being. (I pass over methodological remarks and digressions, e.g. 16–18, 38–41.) It might be, as some have maintained, that the goddess' own speech is partly on the negative route, that she is guilty of self-referential inconsistency. But the complex play of position and denial in the poem, and the introduction of both privative and affirmative ways of saying the same thing, make me think otherwise. This is, however, not the place to return to the debates of the 1960s and '70s. And perhaps the debates were too subtle. Being would have to exist, to be the logical subject of the signposts; facts would have to be true of it; it would have to be

[7] David Sedley, *Companion* (see note 6), ch. 6. Charles Kahn, "Greek Philosophy From the Beginning to Plato," in note 3.

the truth, the object of all speculative inquiry; why bother to try to set these necessary functions in opposition to one another? (Charles Kahn has recently adopted a similar point in his review of Hussey's article for the *Routledge History*.)[8] It would not be possible to choose among them without seeing how the *hōs esti* of fragment 2 actually works out in practice in fragment 8. Otherwise, we should let fragment 2 rotate, solitary, in the void.

Here, then, is a summary of what I am finding in fragment 8's argument, at least up through line 42. Again, I am not making a claim about everything in the text. But I am making a claim about sequence:

PREDICATE	**MODALITY**
Denied Positive (e.g. *genesthai*)	Not allowing ingress (Justice)
Affirmed Privative (e.g. *akinēton*)	Forbidding (True Trust)
Affirmed Positive (e.g. *tauton*)	Requiring (Necessity)
Denied Privative (*ateleutēton*)	Not Allowing Failure (Egress) (Doom)

Just how close these notions are to currently standard modal operators, I shall speculate later. But if one imagines the boundary of a spherical solid like a ball, all of the visual pictures that are possible are, in fact, present. One can merely fail to allow entrance or one can actively repel–these being the two modes in which something outside the bound is ruled

8 See Charles Kahn, "Greek Philosophy From the Beginning to Plato," in note 3.

out. In relation to what is inside the bound, one can constrain or, even more strongly, one can prevent an exit—the two modes of affirmation of what the bound contains. Justice and True Trust thus treat coming-to-be and perishing in two different ways.

Another way of putting these points is as follows. Justice and True Trust operate on coming-to-be and perishing in order to deny them. That is, their contribution to the argument is to affirm the first two signposts from line 3, "ungenerable" and "unperishing," affirming privatives by denying positives. Necessity then supports "the same, . . ." which is tied up with the next two signposts: "whole, of a single kind" is encapsulated in "the same" (as we learned from lines 22–25, Being is the same all the way through, without a *diairesis*) and "unmoving" is encapsulated in "remaining in the same place" (Being does not undergo *kinēsis*, as we learned from lines 26–28). What is interesting here is that Doom, in 36–38, is also connected with "whole" and "immovable," only now the modality is different: because no other can or ever will emerge from out of Being, it remains the only whole there is, and no other Being moves out from it, i.e., it does not fail to be "whole" and "immovable." Thus Necessity requires what Doom prevents from not occurring. Again, just as occurred with Justice and True Trust, we have two modes of a single affirmation or denial. Thus:

Justice does not allow coming-to-be and perishing
True Trust actively repelled coming-to-be and perishing
Necessity requires wholeness and immovability
Doom prevents Being from failing to be whole and immovable

In this way the first four signposts are all given two modal justifications, one passive (Justice and Doom) and one active (Necessity and True Trust). And then the last signpost, as we have seen, also occurs twice, once double-negatively, in line 32, and once positively, in line 42. These variations seem to have the philosophical purpose of mixing the various modal metaphors evenly among both positive and negative language. Finally, the picture of the ball in lines 42–49 picks up on the earlier modal metaphors and incorporates them. Nothing crosses the ball's surface from outside to prevent it from arriving at unanimity, and, since it is in equipoise in every direction from the center, it reaches up to the surface equally from inside. The two perspectives, inside and outside, are thus juxtaposed and equated. Just as the final signpost in a sense recapitulates and sums up the other signposts (for a being which is *tetelesmenon* in Parmenides' sense is ungenerable and undying and whole and immovable), so the image of the ball contains the previous imagery and is, as it were, its *telos*, and the goddess' discourse is both circular and cumulative. I shall say shortly that just as the discourse of the dialogue *Parmenides* gives us two possibilities for the One Which Is (which is negative in 'hypothesis' 1, positive in 'hypothesis' 2) and two possibilities for the Others (positive in 'hypothesis' 3, negative in 'hypothesis' 4), so the discourse of the poem, though without real or apparent contradictions, is artfully balanced between affirmation and denial.

The passages also exhibit increases in what one might call 'degrees of relationality.' Being in lines 8–21, described negatively as totally absent from temporal variations, resembles the One of 'hypothesis' 1 of the *Parmenides* in its lack of con-

nection with anything else; time, with its relations of earlier and later, marches on, but without any connection to reality. But when the discourse begins to switch into the positive mode in lines 22–25, we are in a different world where Being coheres with Being and where it has real relationships with itself: it is in itself, in the same place, it does not escape its boundary, it holds together with itself so as to be self-contained and immovable. The introduction of positivity into the discourse allows an increase in the relationality of the subject-matter. Then, finally, in lines 42–49, the ball is described in such a way that there are, as it were, two tiers of relationality. The center of the ball relates to each point on the surface, and then all these radii are equal in a huge set of relations of relations, equal from inside (*messothen*, line 44) and when viewed from outside (*pantothen*, line 43). The ball's many relations to self are now equated with each other. Thus, as far as time goes, being has no relations, but it does have a relation to itself and to its place. And, in every way in which this relation to self might occur, there is equality, as in a ball. In this final case, the language can be not only negative, as in time, and positive, as in space, but also double-negative, with the denial of "incomplete" returning us to the "complete" with which the ball-passage begins. There are thus complicated connections between the negative or positive nature of the descriptive language and the negative or positive nature of the relationships under consideration. As the portrait of being grows richer and more complicated, piling relations on relations, so the language continues to switch sign. Perhaps we are being invited to reflect on these differences, so that the

proof has not only the function of stating what it states, but also the formal function of exhibiting the different ways in which things can be stated. But to reflect on such things is already to be doing logic or dialectic in some sense.

It is also worth mentioning, perhaps, that the sequences of utterances in the poem tell a story, the story of a gradual movement away from contrariety and towards unity. The rejection of time is the rejection of the relations of priority and subsequentness that occur in ordinary time, together with the possibility of birth and death. The affirmative discourse in lines 25–31 is able to incorporate contraries into larger unities, for "unbeginning" and "unending" are two opposed concepts which fit under "immovable." Similarly, "the same and in the same place, according to itself," with its triple repetition of the same stem, pictures a being which coheres with itself within a boundary, one where internal opposition has been sublimated into a unity. Then, finally, we get single terms, so that there is no longer opposition even in the rhetoric: *ateleutēton* and *epideues* are denied, while things like *tetelesmenon*, *asulon*, and *ison* are affirmed. The overall picture is, first, that dyadic contrariety is rejected; second, that it is incorporated into harmony; finally, that it is transcended altogether in favor of simplicity. The logic and rhetoric of the "Truth-section" are cumulative, presenting a clear difference from the active, independent contraries of the "Opinion-section."

The modal language thus turns out to be as complex, varied, and comprehensive as does the language of direct affirmation and negation which is embedded in it, so that in the

end there is only one discourse, that in which the various signposts are affirmed (the *hōs esti* of fragment 2) and enforced (the *hōs ouk esti mē einai* of fragment 2). These personified figures, guardians of the boundary, and their metaphorical actions do not take up all of the language of modality in the poem, with its counterfactuals and rhetorical questions. But the bounds of being are crucial: they keep it in its place, prevent locomotion and destruction, and ensure its perfection and freedom from perspectival variation.

Let us see what happens if, just for a moment, we make the experiment of using contemporary modal operators and taking each statement, not just in terms of its content, but also as an example of the type of statement that it contains. The result would be a sort of skeletal survey of the different kinds of predication, the categorically different ways of determining being:

it is necessary that [S is P] (Necessity . . . the same, etc.)
it is necessary that [S is not-P] (Trust . . . immovable, etc.)
it is not possible that [S is P] (Justice does not allow . . . coming-to-be, etc.)
it is not possible that [S is not-P] (It is not right . . . incomplete)

What we do not have are statements where the copula is negated, i.e. statements of the form

S *ouk esti* P
S *ouk esti* not-P

That is, on these assumptions, we would have a logic where a negated copula cannot introduce a proposition and where everything which is not necessary is impossible, a universe without contingency. If he wishes to deny a proposition, Parmenides will shift the negation onto the modal operator rather than putting it in a place where it must unambiguously be construed as a copula-negation, as a statement about what is not. The clearest case of this is *ou themis . . . ateleutēton.* If it had been *themis mē . . . ateleutēton*, the negation would have to have been taken with the implied copula,

themis [. . . ouk esti ateleutēton]

Only if he is trying to avoid negating the copula itself will he forbid an inference from "It is not possible that S is P" to "S *ouk esti* P." But he does know the difference between "S *ouk esti* P" and "S *esti* (alpha-privative-) P."

This is as far as I feel comfortable taking this particular speculation. But, even if it is refused, I would still claim that the modals and predications in general are related to the possible boundary-metaphors in the way described above. I turn now again to the question of possible similarities between this method and the method of Plato's *Parmenides.*

It is possible to make quite a skeletal and informal summary of the method in the second half.[9] We are to take any pair of forms, any two of the transcendentals introduced in

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[9] Constance C. Meinwald, *Plato's* 'Parmenides' (Oxford, 1991); Coxon, *Fragments.*

Zeno's treatise, most of which has occurred offstage: one/many, like/unlike, same/different, and so on. (The existing second half combines one and being, in 'hypotheses' I-IV, or does not combine them, in 'hypotheses' V-VIII, but it is important to see that any two of the basic notions could have been selected. The total method, then, is quite large, and would have involved a grand survey of all relationships among syncategorematic terms. To use the language of the *Sophist*, it would show where and how they blend with each other and where they do not.

The method in the second half continues as follows. (There are in reality only two hypotheses, not eight or nine.)[10] First we examine the hypothesized term (the One which blends with Being) in relation to itself (so-called 'hypothesis' 1), then in relation to the Others (so-called 'hypothesis' 2). And we examine these Others in relation to the term ('hypothesis' 3) and then in relation to each other ('hypothesis' 4). We next do the whole thing over again on the assumption that the One does not blend with Being ('hypotheses' 5 through 8). Then, after the dialogue we have is finished, we continue in the same manner, making eight 'hypotheses' for each pair of basic terms, until the whole set of terms is covered, a very lengthy, exhaustive procedure, covering hypotheses such as "Likeness is Whole," "Unlikeness is Many," "The Same is One," and so on. (We would probably also have to have some guarantee of completeness for the list of terms.)

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[10] John A. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 109–17.

Thus:

1 One-One
2 One-Others
3 Others-One
4 Others-Others

This is meant as a remark about architectonic only, about the skeleton. Many critics would agree with it, with Coxon and Scolnicov being two recent examples. The survey is not, however, an attempt to deal with traditional questions like: is it the same One and the same set of Others which are at issue all the way through? Are the pairs of hypotheses intended antinomically? If so, how would the antinomies be resolved? Or are the pairs intended perhaps as genuine contradictions, or perhaps simply as *aporiai?* Is the Parmenides of the dialogue criticizing some philosopher in particular, perhaps even one of Plato's earlier selves? What is the relation of the content of the dialogue to the presumed content of Eleatic metaphysics? And even one of the oldest: should we take the second half seriously at all, or as a *reductio* of eristic or skeptical play?

To return to the description of method: we must, however, say right away that, on a monistic interpretation of the historical Parmenides, there are, of course, no 'Others' to deal with; the most Parmenides does and can do with them is to deny their existence, with Doom. But, this being said, the details of the analogy between the poem and the dialogue appear to be as follows. (It is convenient to draw circles to indicate completeness):

Affirm Positive
(Anankē)

Affirm Privative *(Pistis)*	Deny Privative *(themis)*

Deny Positive
(Dikē)

Affirm One
(II)

Affirm Others (III)	Deny One (I)

Deny Others
(IV)

Obviously the two sequences cannot be made exactly parallel, and I consider 'hypotheses' I-IV only. But note that there are two variables at stake in each sequence. And the analogy can be made tighter in words. The methodological triad I mentioned earlier was: first, Being is viewed in isolation from time and negatively; second, Being is viewed in relation to itself and positively; third, Being is viewed as a set of relations of relations and double-negatively. The first two treatments of the One in the dialogue are similar, with the first 'hypothesis' (the One in isolation even from Being) being

negative in its conclusions, the second (the One blends with everything else, even to the extent of becoming an indefinite multitude) being positive. The third 'hypothesis,' also positive, gives us a positive description of the Others in relation to the One. Now the fourth 'hypothesis' (the Others in relation only to each other) cannot be mirrored as such in the text of the historical Parmenides, since there are no Parmenidean 'Others' to talk about. But what he can do next is to deny that there can be such an other, and this, as we have seen, operates double-negatively, with Doom, followed by a transition back to the picture of Being itself as like a ball. And here we find the analogy to the fourth 'hypothesis,' for the third, still allowing existence of some sort to the Others, was still positive while the fourth denies even this as it doubles otherness upon itself. That is:

POEM			
Deny Positive	Affirm Privative	Affirm Positive	Deny Privative

DIALOGUE			
Negative One	Positive One	Positive Others	Negative Others

Where the One in the dialogue relates only to itself, or the Others relate only to each other, thus existing only in isolation, as it were, as in 'hypotheses' I and IV, the poem has denials. On the other hand, the poem affirms things in parallel to the situations where, in the dialogue, the One and the Others are allowed to stand in relation to something, i.e. to each other, as in 'hypotheses' II and III. Then the poem treats

positive predicates, by way of affirmation *or* denial, where the dialogue has the One as the second of the *relata* ('hypotheses' I and III). And the poem treats privative predicates where the dialogue relates things to the Others ('hypotheses' II and IV). I do not myself know, and fear that it may never be known, what was really in the minds of these philosophers when they designed these formal structures. But if these parallels are real, it may be that a similar conception of argument or justification is at work. Palmer and Coxon, to name two recent critics who have stressed the Eleatic nature of the second half, are correct in many of the parallels they draw in content. But I do not think that it is necessary to follow Palmer in disqualifying half of the hypotheses as attacks on Gorgias, rather than maintaining them as integral parts of a single method. And the Eleatic elements that Coxon is looking for may lie, not in some oral method of which the historical poem would be only one half–the positive half–but in the poem's own complex logical sequences. It is the whole Truth-section, up to the beginning of the ball-passage, which seems to embody the parallels, and one is, I think, entitled to speak of one method in both poem and dialogue, in spite of the fact that the latter parades (at least apparent) contradictions while the former operates in the service of harmony. As the dialogue explores both positive and negative discourse about the One and the Others, creating an antinomic arrangement, to borrow Malcolm Schofield's language,[11] so it explores both positive and negative discourse

[11] Malcolm Schofield, "The Antinomies of Plato's Parmenides," *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 27 (1977) 139–58.

about the Others. As the poem accepts and rejects positive discourse, so it accepts and rejects privative discourse. The method in both cases involves the exhaustion of all those possibilities for affirmation and denial that are permitted by the ontology in question. And this is the formal analogy. Parmenides had a theory in which positives and privatives, assertions and denials, are distinguished from each other, and then are all used in sequence in order to convey and prove the signposts. The route of *esti* is, then, just this discourse—a circular transition through all the different propositions that are possible in a speech *amphis Alētheiēs* (line 51). And the result is a map of the intelligible world, whether monistically Parmenidean or pluralistically Platonic, in all of its possible ramifications.

The historically Parmenidean method thus has important connections with the method of Plato's *Parmenides*, especially on the issue of negation and its incorporation into a systematic, exhaustive discourse. And it is possible, I think, that something like this was also the dialectic of the *Republic*, where each hypothesis in turn is taken up and 'destroyed' by having both positive and negative consequences deduced from it. Coxon's point[12] that *dialegesthai* in the *Parmenides* is not used of the gymnastic method, but only of discourse about forms, need not work against this, since, as Coxon also observes, the entities in Zeno's discourse (and therefore in the second half) are also called 'forms.' But this 'destruction,' instead of wiping out hypotheses and leaving us with a blank, simply illustrates the

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[12] A.H. Coxon, *Philosophy of Forms* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1999), p. 120.

architecture of the intelligible world in all of its interstices, telling us how the topmost forms blend or do not blend with each other. And this will, in its turn, tell us something about the Good, the principle which determines the placement of each form in relation to the others and to the whole. We need not adopt a Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides*, in which each hypothesis introduces a different level in a descending ontology, in order to see this. It is sufficient to have a closed set of first principles and then chart out the ultimate reason for why they relate to each other the way they do. The positive and negative discourse of the historical Parmenides will be the ancestor of this method, just as it was the ancestor of Zeno's method, where putative contradictions (read: both positive and negative conclusions) are deduced from each 'hypothesis.' Even in the remnants we have of Zeno, there are antinomies: space is finitely divisible (the moving arrow) versus space is infinitely divisible (Dichotomy and Achilles); motion is towards a fixed endpoint (Dichotomy) versus towards a receding endpoint (Achilles); it is judged against a fixed background (all three) versus against a moving background (Stadium). But where Zeno generated contradictions whose purpose was to disable the sensible world, and where Plato generates opposed statements about the intelligible world which are true in different respects,[13] Parmenides simply examines and lists all the possible ways in which Being can be, a list in which there are,

[13] The respects–instead of being different kinds of predication, as many interpreters maintain–are simply 'in relation to the One,' 'in relation to the Others,' and so on. There is an excellent diagram of this in Samuel Scolnicov, *Plato's Parmenides* (University of California Press, 2003).

of course, no contradictions and no plurality. The fact that the variations occur in a kind of sequence and are partially localized in the poem makes me think that Parmenides was interested in displaying a logical theory, but one which, owing to the constraints of his ontology, had only one necessary object. But the method, whether it appears in later dialectic or in later logic, is generalizable and survives the death of its inventor as it gets incorporated into new ontologies. Aristotle, for whom dialectic is only a particularly controversial form of rhetoric, will then use positive and negative formal structures as a part of logic, in a discussion of ways in which terms can be affirmed or denied of individual subjects, in order to connect the basic framework of language with *his* ontology.

In considering logic and syntax, I do not mean to deny that Parmenides was also a mystic, at least in some sense. (The divisions among schools of philosophy at the beginning of our century have little to do with Presocratics, who comfortably wore many philosophical and political hats.) It is, I think, possible that, as Long has suggested, Plotinus' interpretation of fragment 3 was correct, that, in an absolutely monistic ontology, we, too, are identical with being—or, at least, our *nous*, thought of as a non-doxastic part of ourselves that does not change, is identical. Here one has to disagree with Mourelatos' reading of the line. [14] Let me briefly work out some suggestions present in older work by Phillips and in Long. Anything whatsoever, to the extent that it is fully real and meets the goddess' criteria for reality, would have to be identical with being,

[14] Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *Route* (see note 3), p. 75 n. 4.

and that includes you and me in our transcendental egos, or whatever you would want to call a deeper self, should we have one, which did not experience the passage of time and was identical with what it contemplated.[15]

Scattered every which way though it may seem to be, being does not abandon its grip on itself (fragment 4), nor is it possible for it to be extinguished, held as it is within bounds which keep it from wandering away (fragment 8, lines 13–15). It is not remote; instead, all our language and thought—even our false or incomplete attempts—ultimately refer to it (fragment 8, lines 38–41), and the 'now' in which it dwells, though it does not pass by (fragment 8, line 5), is also the moment in which we ourselves, at best, might also be living unawares. Not our life histories, or our sex, or any empirical part of what we usually call our identity, would be identical with Being, but only our *nous* which, not subject to becoming, abides in oneness with what it contemplates. Russell, in *Mysticism and Logic*, made the observation that there is a certain philosophical psychology for which logic and mysticism are compatible. He mentions Parmenides and Hegel, and he need have looked no further than Plato, Leibniz, or the *Tractatus*.[16] And the abstractness of Parmenidean Being does not rule out an identity with the deeper self of the inquirer. Here is a quotation from Phillips, one which could just as easily have been written by Plotinus or Proclus:

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[15] *Sophist* 256A.

[16] Bertrand Russell, *"Mysticism and Logic" and Other Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918), pp. 18–19.

> If everything, that is, thinks, and the only thing that is, is, in fact, the One Being, then that Being can think of nothing but itself, so that it will indeed be both subject and object in experience . . . [17]

In this sense we are Being thinking itself. If this seems strange, we need only recall Aristotle's ideas about intellection, where, even in the cognition of biological species, it is the form of the species itself which has come to in-form the intellect and thus to produce a relationship of identity between subject and object, though there remain, in this relationship, two distinct individuals because the matters are different.[18] But, at least in the Aristotelian divine intellect, one without matter, there is an identity of the individuals as well,[19] and it is this identity that the Neoplatonists have in mind when they use both Parmenides, fragment 3, and Aristotle, Book Lambda, in the discussion of their second hypostasis, one which is as much Being as it is Intellect.[20] It is not difficult to imagine ethical consequences, at least for Parmenides: not only detachment from the world of *Doxa* and devotion to

[17] See A. A. Long, "Parmenides on Thinking Being," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 12 (1996) 125–62 and G.D. Phillips, "Parmenides on Thought and Being," *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955) 546–60, p. 558.

[18] *De Anima* III:4 (430a2–5).

[19] *Metaphysics* XII:9 (1074b34–35).

[20] Referred to by Pierre Aubenque in v. 2, p. 116 of D.J. O'Brien, ed., *Le poème de Parménide: Texte et traduction* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1987). Plotinus, V, 1, 8, line 17, and Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1, 66, line 4.

inquiry, but also the personal fulfillment involved in thinking that this devotion has already, in some underlying sense at least, achieved its term, whatever the shipwreck of audiovisual fact may do.

If thought and being are one, a systematic speech can have both positive and negative sides without losing its monistic focus. In Essay Three, I attempt to continue the story through its Neoplatonic and Trinitarian inheritors, on through Hegel's interpretation of it to its survival in contemporary philosophical schools and chasms.

Why should we read Parmenides again? Not just, I take it, for merely methodological or historical reasons. For the thought that there is an abiding oneness underneath the tragedies and satyr-plays of our lives does more than present Heraclitus differently, foreshadow Plato, or echo a comforting religious or metaphysical reassurance, given by a new Orpheus of rational method. It is also a way of life, one later made more accessible by a Socrates who was also an inquirer into what a thing is, and who also used stultification, introduced by the fact that the mind can give both Yes and No answers to the same question, as a way of forcing one's focus upwards into the transcendent through an ethical life and a continued theoretical inquiry. In this sense, not just ancient Greek philosophy, but our whole culture, owes a debt to Parmenides. The richness of Eleatic discourse, not its impoverishment, is what fragment 8 unfolds for us, and the tradition's subsequent descent into non-identity, plurality, change, and contradiction is curiously prefigured in the logic and rhetoric of the West's first surviving specimen of transcendental argument.

ESSAY TWO

■

PARMENIDEAN METAPHYSICS

In this second essay, I would like to attempt a reconstruction of Parmenides in philosophical terms, not in methodological terms, as was tried in the first essay. But the philosophical issues will, I hope, be not only central, but also perennial. I shall set these out partly on the basis of the conclusions of the first essay, and partly on the basis of conclusions for which I have argued elsewhere. The attempt in this essay will, however, necessarily be incomplete, for the ramifications of Parmenides extend even into our own day. I shall attempt a study of this extension in the third essay.

I urge to begin with, as I urged in the first essay, that we abandon the attempt to figure out the motivations of Parmenides' argument by looking to fragment 2 first and then making conjectures about what the Parmenidean *esti* in that fragment means or could mean. No amount of research, amplification, or surgery is going to make this fragment specific enough. Instead, we should look to fragment 8 as an example of the discourse which fragment 2 makes both possible and necessary, and reason backwards instead of forwards. This may fail, but it is high time that it was tried. I begin along the way with a set of compressed, numbered assertions, without

notes or an attempt at justification, and follow with a commentary on those assertions.

1. As I have tried to show, the Parmenidean logic was one where predicates could be denied in various ways, and Parmenides displays the results of such negations using alpha-privative predicates as well as denials executed by using various modal figures.

Although Being is the only subject of such predications, it goes through all the permutations that are possible. The signposts, then, function in something like the ways the Aristotelian or Kantian categories function: as modes of predication, abstract ways of determining objects in a judgment which has *esti* as its copula. The list is skeletal, and there is only one object to be determined, but it is the bounded list of the modes of the logic of reality.

2. If we accept the equation between the morning star and the evening star as Parmenidean (ironically, also an example used in the late nineteenth century), then there is also a Parmenidean distinction between the meaning of a word and its reference.

This distinction arises from the attempt to avoid a certain type of contradiction. For the star which shines only in the evening is not, on the face of things, a star which shines only in the morning. To equate the two is to require us to distinguish between what an expression says and what it is about. This attempt also involves Parmenides in the rejection of the contraries of the "Opinion"-section. For those contraries, too, though they may point to Being, do so in opposite ways. (For

a further discussion of what *tōi pant'onomastai* might mean in this context, please see below.

3. The Platonic *Sophist* was an attempt to show that a plurality of formal meanings was only possible if a distinction was drawn between identity and predication. (Being *is* the same with itself but not the same with the sameness which it *has*, 256A.) The *Parmenides*, on the present reading, is also an attempt to explore the relations obtaining between the formal meanings, both in the presence of such relations, when Forms are connected, and in their absence, when Forms are isolated.

4. The issues raised in (1), (2), and (3) are connected. It is important to show that a rejection of the negative route, and a rejection of non-identity, do not involve Parmenides in a rejection of negative predications and modal statements. It is also important to show that, for Parmenides, non-identical meanings can have the same referent, otherwise non-identity statements, if we take them seriously, create distinctions where there are none, for example between the Fire and the Night with which mortals begin their ontology. (If non-identity is rejected, then all things are one.) Finally, Plato apparently thought that a plurality of meanings was only possible through a plurality of non-identical, but related, Forms. (Being participates in Sameness without being identical with Sameness.) In a sense, Plato's criticism of Parmenides is on the mark, for if (as in the Forms) the meaning of a universal term consists in its reference, then there have to be many referents—many non-identical Forms—if there are to be many meanings. In another sense, the Platonic criticism of

Parmenides is off the mark, for Parmenides is well aware of the fact that, for him, negative discourse, not including non-identity, is possible. He just wants to restrict that discourse to only one object. Parmenides already knows in Elea that not all negative predications are negative existential or negative identity-statements, and this is, on one interpretation, just the distinction drawn in Athens, after much labor, in *Sophist* 256A.

5. To say more about complex propositions and the issues they raise: the second half of the *Parmenides* envisages a method which is much larger than what we have in the dialogue. Each pair of syncategorematic terms, not just the One and Being, is to be given an eightfold treatment, so that we would have to do what the dialogue does also for the pair involving the One and the Same, the pairs involving the Same and Being, Motion and the One, and so on. This is in fact an exploration of what happens when Forms do or do not blend, as I tried to show in the first essay. And here there is no problem of having different meanings for the same referent, since each meaning has its own referent. As Coxon has hypothesized,[21] the Megarians may have thought that each Form was in isolation from all other Forms, having only one character, and this may have been a response to conditions on discourse which were genuinely Eleatic. But Parmenides comfortably asserts many signposts, many road-markers, of the one Being, some positive and some negative. Thus the Platonic and Megarian conditions on meaning involve a plurality of meanings which is

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[21] A.H. Coxon, *The Philosophy of Forms* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1999), p. 123.

post-Parmenidean. But in another sense, Parmenides is already aware that many meanings—many signposts of quite different logical import—can attach to one thing, and this is a point that Plato does not seem to write about until the late dialogues, though I now suspect that he was always aware of it.

6. I have attempted to interpret these signposts, not only as carrying the meanings they carry, but also in terms of their logical form: they are abstract forms for types of discourse (affirmation, denial, position, privation). It is this multiplicity of logical form which allows them to differ even if they all have Being as their common referent. The fact that this is not extremely ample may reflect early philosophical conditions, but may also be the result of the extreme abstractness of the predicates involved: they are the categories for all possible judgments. So that the *Parmenides*, if, indeed, it is in dialogue with Eleatic issues, is intended to show that any contradictions that arise from the positing of complex propositions can be removed by taking differences in respect (one-one, one-others, etc.) into account? And so the Eleatic project of giving an account of ultimate reality can tolerate, in late Plato, not only pluralism, but also complexity? In the original Eleatic project, we saw the four faces of necessity, of what happens when contradiction is prohibited and relegated to "Opinion," but Plato can still have as his job the demonstration that the non-identities he wants need not have involved strict contradiction.

7. I should make clear at this point that I am still presupposing the account of the "Opinion"-section that I gave above. In this account, what is wrong with the entities of that section

is that, as the text says, each (e.g. Fire) is the same with itself and not the same *with the other* (e.g. Night), this "the same . . . not the same" (fragment 8, lines 57–58) being an index of contradiction or contextual relativity and being marked with contrariety. I have attempted to argue for this view elsewhere.[22] It is not the negative language as such which marks "Opinion," or—for that matter—the baldly negative route *hōs ouk esti*, for many kinds of negative language (without non-identity) are found also in "Truth."

8. What distinguishes the Parmenidean signposts from each other, then, is not their referent—for they all refer to Being, as Coxon has pointed out—but their logical form. The treatment of time denies positives; the treatment of space and motion affirms both positives and privatives as it explores Being's relation to itself; the treatment of perfection, a summary quality, is both positive and double-negative. If there had not been an objection to non-identity in Parmenides' thought, this diversity of form could indeed have served as a template for predications about many things. As it is, though, these formal alternatives are something like a complete description just of Being. And the diversity is important for anyone who wishes to see Parmenides as opening up future developments in Greek philosophy, if there is any comparison to be drawn between these forms and the Platonic syncategorematic terms or the Aristotelian categories. For to allow non-identity statements into the system will immediately open up the possibility

22 Scott Austin, *Parmenides: Being, Bounds, and Logic* (New Haven: Yale, 1986), chapter 5.

of plural referents for these terms and, later, the possibility of focal ambiguity in their application.

9. The signposts, then, are the forms for all possible judgments. They mark the ways of being one in eternity just as the Kantian categories mark the ways of being one in time. The method which employs and displays them is relevantly similar to the method of Plato's *Parmenides*. To open up the ontology would be to make possible the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.

Here, now, is how I would attempt to amplify some of the claims made in this list of assertions. Several questions arise. Is all this discourse really allowable? That is, can fragment 8 really be reconciled with fragment 2, which seems to demand only positive discourse? Or is there an inevitable self-referential inconsistency here, with the goddess saying what she should not say in order to explain why she should not say it? And, historically speaking, can a Parmenides who appears to be comfortable with negative discourse be reconciled with Plato's picture of the Eleatics as unaware that the necessary negations of human discourse work against their philosophy? Where, indeed, do we find a worked-out theory of negation, with some logical complexity, before Plato's *Sophist* or even later?

To all such questions I would reply that the text of fragment 8 is its own best evidence. If it contains, up through line 51, trustworthy discourse "about Truth" (a discourse which is, moreover, as I have tried to show, formally complete in some sense), then a charge of anachronism based on the fragment's inclusion of negative language has to give way. In general, I think we should be suspicious of statements of the form

"Philosopher X cannot have had notion N because philosopher Y, who was the first to have notion N, was later than philosopher X." The charge which is more difficult to answer is the claim that the negations are the result of self-referential inconsistency.[23] This charge, which ultimately dates from the Academy, depends for its success or failure, not on the loops and interstices of post-modern philosophy or even of Platonic criticism, but, again, on how we take a trustworthy discourse about Truth. It is only in the "Opinion"—section that the goddess warns us against her own words, which, in that section, do undercut themselves in all sorts of ways: irony, implicit contradiction, transitions between identity and non-identity, and so on. A Parmenides whose philosophy hangs on at least some opposition between "is" and "is not" could not have missed the negations which constitute the majority of this "trustworthy discourse." We must, as I suggested above, argue from fragment 8 to fragment 2 and find a way of construing the negations as acceptable discourse.

But there is another, equally legitimate, problem here: how can a plurality of signposts be reconciled with the logical simplicity which the entity of this absolute monist would have to have? Here we have to deal with the fact that Parmenides' heirs (Empedocles, Anaxagoras, the Atomists, the Megarians, so-called 'middle' Plato) were pluralists, a fact which lends

[23] This charge is most readily found in *Sophist* 243A1 & ff. It is also raised by Montgomery Furth, "Elements of Eleatic Ontology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1968) 111–32, reprinted in A.P.D. Mourelatos, ed., *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 241–70.

credibility to the growing number of pluralistic or potentially pluralistic interpretations of him (Mourelatos, Barnes, Curd, Graham, Hermann).[24] The Megarians, in particular, though they allowed a plurality of realities, insisted that each of them be distinguished by only one predicate. And so Coxon treats all the signposts as interchangeable names for Being—presumably, without a plurality of ontologically distinct meanings. Does not a plurality of signposts, each with a different function at least logically, compromise the simplicity of an ultimate monad?[25]

Here we touch again on the problem of Parmenides' attitude towards the problem of sense and reference. This distinction, at least recently, involves in part the attempt to avoid a certain type of contradiction, the type involved in saying "The star which shines only in the morning (but not in the evening) is the star which shines only in the evening (but not in the morning)." It looks as though Parmenides is assigning the two contradictory elements to different meanings in "Opinion" and the non-contradictory element to a single referent in "Truth." The two stars *appear* to be opposites but *are* really one. The problem of plurality in the signposts is part of the

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24 Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven: Yale, 1970); Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (2 vols.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); Daniel Graham, "Empedocles and Anaxagoras: Responses to Parmenides" in A.A. Long, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 159–80; Arnold Hermann, *To Think Like God* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004); Patricia Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004).

25 Coxon, *Philosophy of Forms* (see note 21), p. 123.

same problem. It is sometimes thought that (let's say, the so-called 'middle') Platonic theory of Forms fails to distinguish between sense and reference. A Form is the referent for each universally predicated 'meaning,' the idea being that the ultimate meaning of each universally predicated term is the same as its reference, with contradictory meanings appearing only on the level of sensibles—just as in Parmenides, only now with a plurality of 'meanings.' It is clear from the younger Socrates' initial critique of the Zeno of the *Parmenides* that the distinction between Forms and sensible particulars (read: between "Truth" and "Opinion") is supposed to play a role in avoiding this type of contradiction.[26] (Contradictions are inevitable and harmless in sensibles, but the younger Socrates would be astonished if they were to obtain on the level of Forms.) And the historical Parmenides may have had the same problem in mind. But his view is not Megarianism: Being can have more than one really distinct predicate, with each signpost having a unique formal or categorical function.

This raises again the question of the historical accuracy of Plato's reading of Parmenides. I have in mind a Parmenides who was aware of some problems that Plato seems nevertheless to have struggled during much of his career to solve. Is this anachronistic? Not if you see Plato as trying, for the purposes of ethical discourse, the discourse of Socrates, to adapt Eleatic ontological criteria to a universe which, on its truest level, had to include a plurality of meanings corresponding to the different zones of human excellence and rational discourse

[26] *Parmenides* 128E5–130A3.

in general. It may then only be in the *Sophist* that Plato fully works with the negation-inviting nature of such a plurality. But this, like the *Parmenides*, is, if you like, already a context where the Eleatic heritage is at issue. Again, these are not necessarily the distinctions as drawn during the last two centuries of our era. But, for example, Aristotle's distinction between "what a thing is" and "that a thing is" is not only the Avicenna/Aquinas textual support for the distinction between existence and essence, but also a distinction between sense and reference, with "what a thing is" being sense, the essence, definition, or quiddity, and "that a thing is" having to do with its reference, with the concrete existence of the singular.[27] For Parmenides all terms, whatever their sense—even the pseudo-contraries of "Opinion"—refer to Being. But this does not mean, as Schwabl has been led to maintain,[28] that the world of "Truth" *is* the world of "Opinion." Instead, the pseudo-entities of "Opinion" are Being as it appears, not as it is, with 'that pseudo-entity which is an appearance of X' not sharing all properties with X. On the other hand, if this is taken to mean "Being appears now as the Morning Star and nine months from now as the Evening Star," I think Parmenides could agree: one referent and two contradictory senses.

In claiming these things, I have passed over the problem of appearance caused by the fact that we, too—the persons to

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27 *Timaeus* 52D2-E5.

28 Hans Schwabl, "Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides" *Wiener Studien* 70 (1957) 279–89 (reprinted with revisions in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Um die Begriffswelt der Vorsokratiker* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968).

whom "Opinion" appears—are also parts of "Opinion" with our wandering limbs and *nous*. It would seem that the signposts, though they constitute a plurality, are not yet part of "Opinion," though it is true that they are many terms with one referent. This is, I suppose, because, though they differ in, among other things, being many types for positive and negative logical form, there are no real contradictions among them, at least not of the kind that would require the supposition of two distinct *entities* in order to carry the contradiction. There is, instead, compatibility, whereas the entities of "Opinion" must succeed each other in time and/or place because they are incompatible, at least on the level of appearance. We are told that "to come to be" and "to perish," "to be," and "not at all (to be)," "change of place," and "change of bright color" are all *onomastai* of Being. Whatever *onomastai* means, surely part of the point is that all these (sometimes) contradictory things have to do with Being, as the only real object about which they can be. Mortals who use these forbidden terms in mortal ways, thinking that they have truth, are really referring to Being (if they are referring to anything) without knowing it; even if one says or thinks that something comes to be, it is really Being which is the intended object even of this false statement, though not taken according to its literal sense. That is, the meaning is inappropriate, but the reference is ironically appropriate. Even the statements in "Opinion," though they are false, bear on, have to do with, point to Being in its capacity as truth. Contextually relative statements cannot be true in their literal meaning of real entities, and mortals are deceived in their way of taking things, in

their general opinions, in their attitude towards what they think is trustworthy—in their *Doxa.* And so the sense in which truth is the referent even of false sentences or opinions is different than the compresence of opposites in the entities of "Opinion." The former is the ironically intended object even of false sentences, as intending to be true; the latter are the false sentences themselves, as believed to be true (in their relative meanings) by those who use them.

There still remains the problem of how appearance gets going in the first place. It would not appear that Being enters into appearance of its own accord or necessarily, like the Platonic or Plotinean first principle which overflows because it has to; it is so good.[29] Being could have remained forever alone, enclosed within its own boundary, like the Empedoclean Sphere if there had been no Strife. Nor does Being enter into appearance because it appears to *us*—still less because we make it appear—for we, too, are parts of appearance, at least in what I earlier called our 'doxastic selves' (my identity in the cybernetic or legal sense is only part of how Being *appears* in my vicinity), and our origin as appearance would have to be explained first, a doxological circle. Nor is there any reality, not part of appearance and independent of Being, to which Being could appear. Nor does appearance have Being in the full sense of the word.

Perhaps the best solution to the problem is that, when rightly understood in its character as appearance, "Opinion" disappears. Fire, if taken to be the whole of reality and no

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29 *Timaeus* 29D7–30A1.

longer just taken, along with Night, to be half, is no longer Fire, if by 'Fire' we mean something which by its very nature is one member of a pair of contraries. Instead, as the whole of reality, it would simply be Being, though the sensation of burning might remain. A mortal who realizes this, no longer viewing the world through the lenses of contrariety, will also no longer be able to see him- or herself as distinct from Being, for that, too, is a prohibited non-identity. He or she is identical with Being, with the very large qualification that all of his or her 'doxastic parts' are now shorn away, including proper name, the sequence of thoughts and impressions constituting the empirical inner life, the body, personal history, and so on. It is only *as* pure Being that one is identical with Being. If fragment 3 has a mystical sense, this is surely it. But the crucial question, how to reach this part of oneself that is identical with Being—or better, how to reach the Being which is identical with oneself minus all these doxastic things—remains unanswered by this formal and abstract description of an identity. We can only follow the goddess' route, and hope for the best. If even the path through which we travel to those gates is itself an illusion, then so are the goddess and the route, unless it is a route deep into oneself. But what path, all of whose stepping-stones are themselves illusory, would lead us out of illusion altogether? Would reality then be marked by an absence of features, except perhaps the very abstract features pointed to by the road-markers? Or are we already at the end of the route without realizing it? What part of a human self, then, is immobile and eternal and perfect? Here, perhaps, we are at the end of philosophy and the beginning of some-

thing else. But note the difference between Parmenides and, say, a mysticism of love, remaining ecstatic and without argument in the midst of the infinite. Not only does Parmenides argue, but he is also at the source of something usually regarded as incompatible with mysticism—namely European logic and dialectic. What to make of this unusual coincidence, so at odds with certain stereotypes obtaining, not only in popular culture, but also in much writing of both the mystical and the logical varieties? Hegel made of Parmenidean reality nothing but a pure plenum of being, featureless and without inner articulations, identical with the Nothing which he thought it resembled so much. But in doing this he ignored Parmenides' own plethora of negations and logical types. And yet Hegel, who breaks the law of non-contradiction on which Parmenides so insisted, is mentioned by Russell in the same breath with Parmenides in the passage on fragment 3 I referred to above, in my first essay. (Russell, though, not wishing to advertise mysticism, thinks that the logic of both figures is only a prop for a prior experience that remained essentially private and incommunicable and on which, according to Russell, it is not wise to rely exclusively.)[30] But what if the Parmenidean logic and mysticism belong together and are inseparable? In that case, what is the aboriginal tie that connects them? I have attempted to supply the answer to this question above: either we are nothing at all, or—only when rightly understood—we dissolve into Being, like the rest of the entities of appearance.

[30] Bertrand Russell, *'Mysticism and Logic' and Other Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1918), pp. 18–19.

And it is philosophy, understood as the route about truth, which, like Plato's ladder of love, aids in the dissolution. This, again, is a doctrine of the primacy of philosophy in human life and thought, where philosophy is understood in a very deep sense as a universal ontology, but also an ontology that has consequences for logical form. If this be accepted, it is not surprising that we find both a mystic and a logician in Parmenides: the 'route of Parmenides' is just fragment 8, the journey to truth along the circle of its eternally unifying categories both positive and negative. It would also be clear that, in some sense, the Platonic and Aristotelian enterprises are expansions on the Parmenidean, with allowances made for plurality, the non-identity and participation which are consequent on plurality, change and development, sensible substance, and so on. Plato draws Parmenides down into a plurality of universals; Aristotle makes a renewed stab at an account of nature, now on Platonic principles instead of Ionian; but for both, we are, even at our best, merely contemplators of the highest level in the ontology, not beings who have become identical with Being, or have realized their identity with it. Parmenides is thus, in spite of his horror at some aspects of the sensible world ("hateful birth," fragment 12, line 4) more of an optimist than either of his successors about our ultimate reality and destiny. But he has, in the end, an easier job, since the road-markers to be traversed are more abstract and smaller in their number.

The Parmenidean discourse about Truth is a road through the types of predication, necessity, and impossibility that are permitted in his rather exclusive ontology. To follow the road is to realize one's own identity with the reality which rests at

its end. Such a combination of mysticism and logic is not unique in philosophy, but it is not the most common path; it requires to be supplemented by an "Opinion"-section which lists the elements of the prohibited ontology, one resting on non-identity and contrariety. The progress of philosophy after Parmenides consists largely in the exploration of just this prohibited ontology. Plato reintroduces non-identicals; Aristotle reintroduces sensible individuals; Hegel reintroduces contradictions.[31]

A monad which was absolutely simple could not, in the end, have any relations that were not identical with itself. In particular, it has no relations with an other. It is, again, in Plato's *Sophist* that we encounter a philosophically worthy objection: plurality is possible, now again through a relation—the relation of participation—with the form of Difference, and this forces a refinement of the law of non-contradiction in order to allow a Form to be both the same (with itself) and not the same (with, for example, Difference). (From the point of view of a strict Parmenidean, this is mere Opinion.) The Forms are all thus connected at least with the Same and the Different in a huge web of relations of participation. Only the system as a whole would constitute an analogy with the Parmenidean world of Truth. But the Platonic web, of course, is riddled with non-identities. It is significant that Hegel, in his history of philosophy, (mis) interprets the *Sophist* in support of his own view that contradictions coincide and that relation

[31] Scott Austin, "Parmenides and the Closure of the West," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000) 287–301.

to self is, in the end, only possible through relation to an other. This is the ultimate abandonment of the Parmenidean strictures on discourse. But Plato did not mean to go that far, for he carefully distinguishes the sense in which a thing is from the sense in which it is not. It is not surprising, however, that relational ontologies proliferate after Hegel: one thinks of William James, of Whitehead, and of the importance of difference in some recent French philosophies. Many of the details of these views are thus, if one wishes to take this historical perspective, polar opposites of the Parmenidean view, immersions of Being in Time. But that is what they intend to be.

Indeed, we may be said, now, to have reached the end of the downward path, if post-modern philosophy is taken, for once, as a metaphysics—a metaphysics of signs. For the Parmenidean signs—or medieval sacramental and artistic signs, too—were powerful: they imported the realities that they signified into discourse. But, ironically enough, the era of the liberation of the sign as sign, instead of bringing signs closer to the ontology, has made the entire ontology consist of signs alone. The referent of each sign is now merely other signs, in a moving stream consisting entirely of signs, with no Being distinct from them, like the fourth hypothesis in the *Parmenides*. I am suggesting, perhaps much too elliptically, that the Platonic and Aristotelian compromises with the Parmenidean strictures open up a road that leads ultimately towards an ontology of signs alone. (I attempt in the next essay to answer the question whether this is a good or a bad thing.) And Heidegger's reading of Parmenides also has to be gainsaid: one cannot separate Parmenides' ontology from at

least some of his logic, and Parmenidean Being rests in eternal presence, so that what Heidegger calls 'ontotheology' is not only a post-Presocratic creation, and even the Parmenidean mystical route is one where *Logos* has a purchase. If there is a Being which is partly hidden and partly revealed by appearance—a Being whose disclosure and concealment logic would mar—we must find it before the eternal present in which we dwell with the goddess, perhaps somewhat closer to the Ionian birthplace rather than in Italy. But I shall raise these points again, more amply, at the end of my third essay.

ESSAY THREE

■

PARMENIDES AND THE HISTORY OF DIALECTIC

In this essay I shall attempt to tell, in a more connected way, a story of some of what happens after Parmenides, and thus to pick up on some historical hints present in the first two chapters. This attempt will involve another visit to Parmenidean method and to the method of the *Parmenides*, but only as the beginning of the story, which will then continue through negative and Trinitarian theology to Hegel and to the aftermath of Hegel in our own time. I also make another stab at finding out the nature of that Protean creature, Platonic dialectic. But, first, a remark on some very contemporary problems and on a possible role for the ancient Greeks in our interpretation of these problems.

The major ethical problem in the twentieth century was that of the rationality of values. It did not seem possible, in view of political evils on a large scale, merely to hold on to Enlightenment views of human nature as inherently perfectible through rationality. Yet a wholesale irrationalism seemed not only to make the problem worse—for there would be then no critique of politics whether for good or for evil—but to beg off on the problem too quickly: couldn't there be other, more adequate forms of rationality? If so, where to find them?

At this point the Platonic enterprise again becomes contemporary. For *dialectic* in Plato was put forth, not only as a rational approach to ultimate value (the Good) but also as a way of overcoming limitations inherent in formal, descriptive systems: as Plato knew, and as we found out again in the last century, axiomatic-deductive systems which attempt to justify their own premises only too often wind up in circle, paradox/contradiction/irony, infinite regress. Thus fundamental ethical principles, too, might seem unjustified, relative, irrational, random, matters for sociology, economics, cultural anthropology, *praxis*, rather than for more traditional kinds of philosophy.

In this third essay I attempt to raise again the question of what Platonic dialectic (which, I have already claimed, is essentially Parmenidean) was in an effort to distinguish it from later sorts of dialectic as well as from more contemporary hyperformalisms or irrationalisms. It does no good, in my opinion, merely to call for a nostalgic return to rationality without providing details, and the details are, I think, to be found in historical/comparative study. For 'dialectic' begins with the Eleatics and passes more-or-less undamaged through Plato and through subsequent Trinitarian and Hegelian modifications–after which, of course, it comes to mean something entirely different. This does not mean that we should ourselves *become* Greeks—still less, that the political activity of a Parmenides or a Plato was free from tyranny–only that an ancient possibility for reasonability was, I think, abandoned step-by-step along the line without having been sufficiently tested.

Thus in this study I sketch the nature of Eleatic dialectic again, in a more compressed way, as a triadic sequence in which

negation and positivity are followed by and summed up in double-negation, combined with a survey of different ways in which a plurality might be mapped onto itself. I continue with a longer survey of some historical descendants of this Eleatic method in late Plato, in the tradition of negative theology extending from Proclus through Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to Aquinas' relational theory of the Trinity, and finally in Hegel and in his heirs and rebels.

My attempt is to see at least one strand in rational thinking as a developing unity all the way from Parmenides to Derrida, to see whether any parts of it are still viable, and then to look at it from the outside, from other cultures and from the perspectives of more poetic ways of symbolizing and imagining. I shall not be offering a 'solution' to the 'twentieth-century crisis of values,' but merely inviting the reader to proceed with me from affirmation through negation and its paradoxes along a 'way' common to both East and West, to logicians and mystics alike.

I have claimed above that Parmenides and Zeno shared a single, rather rigorous canon for the establishment of philosophical truths and that this was also the method used under the name of Parmenides in the second half of Plato's *Parmenides* as the sole possible way of defending and justifying a theory of Forms.[32] Briefly, the method involves the exami-

[32] Scott Austin, *Parmenides: Being, Bounds, and Logic* (New Haven: Yale, 1986), chapters 2–6, and also Essays 1 and 2, above. I would like to thank family, teachers, and students, whose root contributions, but not any of the mistakes herein contained, were decisive and still lie at the bottom of the present problematic: James Austin, Judith St. Clair Austin, James Ogilvy,

nation of a plurality by examining all possible relations within the plurality and deducing all possible negative and positive consequences for each relation. I claim that the same method appears in at least one 'early' Platonic dialogue, the *Lysis*, and that what is generally referred to as 'negative theology' (in Western Europe, as distinct from India, the assignment of contradictory negative and positive predications to a single being), as well as Aquinas' theory of the Trinity (contrary relations which form a unity because of their opposition to each other), are special cases of the method. I conclude that what Hegel calls 'dialectic' is another, explicitly trinitarian, special case in which the opposed terms are viewed as *logically* contradictory, descend into the temporal, and get viewed in the sequence of a historical development. I have attempted to comment elsewhere on other ways of contemplating the sequence Parmenides-Trinity-Hegel-Nietzsche as a completed whole.[33] The present study is the discursive version of what is presented intuitively there. As the reader will see, I am generally indebted throughout to a kind of Hegelian picture, but

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Karsten Harries, the late Robert Brumbaugh, Alexander Mourelatos, Louis Mackey, Nicholas Asher, Christopher Lyttle, Nathaniel Rich, Jason Cato. For the beginnings from which all treatment in the twentieth century of the Eleatic influence on Plato derives, see Svend Ranulf, *Der Eleatische Satz vom Widerspruch* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghaldel, 1924) and the four articles by A. Szabó in the *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*: 1 (1951–52), 377–406; 2 (1953–54), 17–57; 2 (1953–54), 243–86; and 3 (1955), 67–102. A substantially identical version of this Essay appeared originally in *Fealsúnacht* (Belfast) 2 (2002), 1–22. I thank Colin Harper, the editor, for keen comments.

33 Scott Austin, "Parmenides and the Closure of the West," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), 284–301.

my specific intention is to show that Hegel read himself into his predecessors in a mistaken way and, in particular, that the discourse of Parmenides' goddess is not a tautological blank, but rather the mine out of which all these affirmations and negations must be quarried. I thus divide the essay into five sections, one each on Parmenides, Plato's *Parmenides*, Plato's *Lysis*, negative theology and the Trinity, and Hegel himself.

Section One: Parmenides

What were the precise characteristics of the method of Parmenides? To repeat the analysis of the goddess' speech given above, there are basically three contexts of argument: a section on time (fragment 8, lines 11–15, devoted to the proofs of 'ungenerable' and 'unperishing'); a section on the occupation of place by mass (lines 22–31, the proofs of 'whole' and 'of a single kind') and a final section (lines 42–49, the proof for 'finished' or 'perfect') in which the conclusions developed during the considerations of time and of mass/place are recapitulated, combined, and rolled up into a complete statement.

The situations examined in each of these three contexts of argument are different. Time involves a situation in which each instant, taken in relation to any other instant, must be either earlier or later. Being cannot be in time, cannot occupy a one-dimensional series in which each member of the series possesses both members of a pair of contraries. When consid-

ering the occupation of place by mass, however, Parmenides is rejecting situations in which one place might have either more or less mass than all the rest; all the locations within Being have equal mass. Being, thought of as mapped onto itself as a two-dimensional set of mass-place pairs, rejects the application of either contrary in any pair. Finally, when considering the radii of the ball or sphere of Being, Parmenides rejects a situation in which one radius might be either longer or shorter than some particular other radius–Being is like a perfect ball, 'finished' or 'perfect' in every way. This final situation recapitulates the two earlier situations: a Being outside of time, which is, moreover, mapped onto itself in a uniform way in metaphorical space, has each relation of center and circumference-point (radius) related to every other such relation equally, since the sphere is a perfect one. Thus all the mappings of Being onto itself (radial distances), when mapped onto *each other* as a set of relations of radii, also reject contraries. In the discussion of time, then, Being rejects a one-dimensional series which is necessarily riddled with contrariety. In the discussion of masses and space, Being, relating to itself as a two-dimensional plurality, can reject all contrariety. In the sphere, Being, as a three-dimensional set of relations of relations, is perfect as contraries again disappear. The *method*, then, is to pair up all members of a plurality (instants, places, radii) in all possible ways (Being, its relations to itself, its relations of relations to self) and to rule out the entrance of relationally contrary terms in any of those ways. A solitary and unmapped Being rejects the linear sequence of contraries involved in time, and so must be spoken of negatively: it is

"un-generable," "un-perishing." Spatial Being, a Being mapped onto itself as a set of places and masses relating to each other, can reject contraries and be spoken of positively: it is "whole, of a single kind." The three-dimensional ball, where the radial mappings are then compared with each other, can be spoken of both positively ("perfect") and double-negatively ("It is not right that it should be imperfect," line 32.) We shall see the same issues in the second half of Plato's *Parmenides*; the comparison of something with itself and with other things which are then compared with each other, and a preoccupation with a combination of positive and negative ways of making a point.

Section Two: Plato's *Parmenides*

Since both Parmenides and Zeno rejected contraries, it is astonishing to the young Socrates in Plato's *Parmenides* to hear both Parmenides and Zeno as deducers of opposed terms using the same method. The method of the character Parmenides in the dialogue is indeed described, not only as the only method for defending a theory of Forms, but also as simply a wider version of the method that the character Zeno uses in the first half; the question the young Socrates poses is then how to distinguish the latter method from a merely sophistical exploitation of sensible contraries. Here is the projection for the method of the second half given by the character Parmenides:

> . . . take as an example this hypothesis that Zeno entertained: if many are, what must the consequences be both for the many themselves in relation to themselves and in relation to the one, and for the one in relation to itself and in relation to the many? And, in turn, on the hypothesis, if many are not, you must again examine what the consequences will be both for the one and for the many in relation to themselves and in relation to each other. And again, in turn, if you hypothesize, if likeness is or is not . . . (135d7–136c5)[34]

We are to take each member of a set of terms and pair it one-by-one with each of the other terms; the result ("Likeness is Different," "The Same is Equal," or, as in the dialogue, "The One is" 1) is a 'hypothesis.' (The real 'hypotheses' in the second half are not the eight or nine commonly distinguished, but just two: "The One is" (One + Being) and "The One is not" (no combination between One and Being).) Then from the first real hypothesis we deduce apparently contradictory conclusions, both with regard to the first term itself (so-called 'hypotheses' 1 and 2) and with regard to all the terms 'other' than it (so-called 'hypotheses' 3 and 4). That is to say: in 'hypothesis' 1 we deduce that the One which Is, taken only in relation to itself, does not blend with any other of the terms; in 'hypothesis' 2 that, taken in relation with the others, it blends with all of them. Similarly, 'hypothesis' 3 exhibits the

[34] As translated by Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan, in John Cooper, ed., and D.S. Hutchinson, associate ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1977), pp. 370–1.

blending of the Others than the One which Is, taken in relation to this One, with all terms, while 'hypothesis' 4 exhibits the situation in which those others, taken now only in relation to each other, blend with no term. The last four 'hypotheses' (the second *real* Hypothesis, that is, that the One is not) function similarly, except for the fact that the positive and negative terms, for reasons as yet unexplained, are reversed as between 'hypotheses' 1 and 2 and, on the other hand, 5 and 6: 1 and 6 (instead of 2 and 6, which the order would lead us to expect) are all negative while 2 and 5 (instead of 1 and 5) are all positive. The conclusion is twofold: first,

> . . . whether one is or is not, it and the others both are and are not, and both appear and do not appear all things in all ways, both in relation to themselves and in relation to each other. (166c1–5) (Gill & Ryan, tr.)

and then, equally importantly,

> . . . if someone . . . won't allow that there are forms for things and won't mark off a form for each one, he won't have anywhere to turn his thought . . . in this way he will destroy the power of dialectic entirely (135b3-c3) (Gill & Ryan, tr.)

In this way the character Parmenides proves just what the character Socrates had tried to avoid–even the Forms are subject to opposed characteristics. And this coupling and lack of coupling of One and Being is only one of the possible junctures in a much larger method, one explicitly declared to be

the only way of saving the Forms. The ancient and recent commentators see that each member of each pair of 'hypotheses' is the contradictory of the other, and that the conclusion is a double-negation which includes both, just as (I claim) happened in the historical Parmenidean method. The difference lies in the question of just how these differences are to be characterized. In the view I shall attempt to defend below, each 'hypothesis' is a destructive exaggeration, but one which, when 'disambiguated' by the methods given in the *Sophist*, yields a set of true statements with opposed statements true in different respects. These true statements, I think, are a picture of a world of Forms which blend with each other in noncontradictory ways, a picture which leads the mind to the Good. But the similarities with Parmenides himself are (a) a method which argues negatively as well as positively (though in the historical Parmenides all is logically harmonious as opposite contraries are ejected from Truth); (b) an increase in degrees of relationality. In the Presocratic figure, the negatively characterized Being rejects a sea of contrary others in time, but is able to accept a positively characterized potentiality in space; in the ball the one returns again as the unifier of the many relations of relations of center to surface-points. And this sphere, thus conceived, can be described both positively and double-negatively. To use the language of the dialogue, we first get a being which does not accept time as a participant (in parallel to 'hypothesis' 1), a many which relate to each other (in parallel to 'hypothesis' 4) and then finally a one-in-many which is also a many-in-one ('hypotheses' 2 and 3); (c) the sequence involving position, negation, and double-

negation occurs in both authors, in Plato as we consider each 'hypothesis' in relation to its contradictory and then affirm both in the second half of the dialogue's conclusion, in the historical Parmenides as we consider Being both isolatedly and negatively, then positively as a plurality, then both positively and double-negatively, a one organizing a plurality and a plurality in relation to a one. It is easy to see why Neoplatonic readers of the dialogue, together with some recent commentators who postulate ambiguity or paradox, think that there are different ontological situations in each 'hypothesis,' but the description of method makes it clear that there is only one One and only one set of Others all the way through, even though each successive 'hypothesis' appears to view a new ontological universe.

The method of the dialogue, then, pairs each member of a given set of Forms with every other both one-by-one (in the so-called 'hypotheses') and as a group in the conclusion. The counting-up of a plurality in this systematic way is not just a formal or enumerative device, but a step-by-step method for obtaining truth in each of the contexts in which it might appear, with the goal of a total statement (in the historical Parmenides the contexts of time, space, and the ball viewed as three different ways in which a plurality might relate to itself, in the Parmenides of the dialogue the many ways in which each member of the world of Zeno's basic list of formal terms might be related or unrelated to every and any other). Whence, I believe, the appositeness of putting the method in the mouth of the character Parmenides, even though the conclusions deduced are opposite rather than expressions of an identity.

All that is really needed for the present comparison between the method of the historical Parmenides and the method in the second half of Plato's *Parmenides* is that there are pairs of 'hypotheses,' each consisting of one 'hypothesis' in which opposed terms are asserted and another in which roughly the same terms are denied (thus 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8). For summaries of the possible positions about the second half, see Proclus' commentary,[35] Brumbaugh's *Plato on the One*,[36] and Sayre's *Parmenides' Lesson*.[37] One route is to claim, with Hegel and Vigo Rossauaer,[38] that the contradictions are and must be an intrinsic part of the ontology and method, that either truth itself contains opposites *in one and the same sense*[39] or that contradictions necessarily result if the inquiry displays the limitations of the human dialogical enterprise (Rossauaer) or a situation that results if the inquiry's scope is too limited (Brumbaugh), dealing with the self-frustration of purely formal systems alone rather than also with the completion of such systems in evaluative or normative inquiry.

Yet there are many interpreters who think that a genuinely self-contradictory method, whatever its ultimate worthwhile results might be, should not be attributed to a Plato who

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[35] Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, tr., Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's 'Parmenides'* (Princeton, 1987).

[36] Robert S. Brumbaugh, *Plato on the One* (New Haven: Yale, 1960).

[37] Kenneth Sayre, *Parmenides' Lesson* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).

[38] Vigo Rossauær, *The Laborious Game: A Study of Plato's 'Parmenides'* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983).

[39] See E.S. Haldane, tr., Hegel's *'Lectures on the History of Philosophy'* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), vol. II, pp. 66–67.

is trying seriously to defend the theory of Forms in the first half of the dialogue and who is, in the *Sophist*, the first to state the Law of Non-Contradiction in its modern form. These interpreters preserve the same tactic—that of resolving or dissolving contradiction—while rejecting Proclus' multi-hypostatic metaphysics. The central claim here will be that there is ambiguity (Cornford),[40] pedagogically useful puzzlement (Allen and Miller),[41] or significant differences in how fundamental issues are treated (Meinwald, for example, treats the negative hypotheses as being about their subjects in different respects than the positive hypotheses, while Turnbull[42] distinguishes between the negative ('Parmenidean') hypotheses and the positive ('Platonic') ones). These last two readings are of course more 'ontological' than the first three. This type of interpretation dates at least from Findlay's distinction between 'expanded' and 'contracted' hypotheses, if not from Peck's earlier article, and has been picked up by Schofield and Coxon.[43] The latest example is Palmer's *Plato's Reception of Parmenides*.[44] All these recent interpretations, including mine in 1986 (see note 32) agree with the Proclan, non-Hegelian

40 F.M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939).

41 R.E. Allen, *Plato's 'Parmenides'* (Oxford, 1991); Mitchell Miller, *Plato's Parmenides: the Conversion of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

42 Robert C. Turnbull, *The 'Parmenides' and Plato's Late Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

43 John N. Findlay. *Plato: the Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 253–54.

44 John A. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford, 1999), Part III.

idea that no contradiction in the second half should be taken to be about the same thing in the same respect. (The extent of Hegel's indebtedness to a 'Neoplatonic' reading of the *Parmenides* is in this sense overestimated.) And here, if one declines the Proclan attempt to set up trinitarian hypostases (but for an interpretation in which the Trinity does turn out to be an heir of the dialogue, please see my discussion later on), the recent interpretations do come into their own. For the distinctions that Findlay, Allen, Sayre, Meinwald, Miller, Turnbull, Coxon, and Palmer draw in an attempt to avoid logical contradictions all boil down to different ways of saying the same things. The negative 'hypotheses' (1, 4, 6, 8) will be descriptions of the One or the Others as keeping too closely to themselves, of not blending enough or having sufficient commerce, while the positive 'hypotheses' (2, 3, 5, 7) will depict too much blending. To use the language of the *Sophist*, which many critics agree has at least something to do with the *Parmenides*, there must be a weaving-together of Forms in which non-numerically-identical Forms do nevertheless in some cases reciprocally blend and in other cases do not. The One in 'hypothesis' 1, underblending with everything else, turns out to underblend even with itself, not even to be or to be one, while the same One in 'hypothesis' 2 overblends with everything else to such an extent that it even becomes many. The middle ground, of course, will be the *Sophist*'s description of the precise senses and respects in which the Forms are and/or are not the same things (Being is one but is not the One), a distinction explicitly declared to be an anti-Eleatic move. And so with the contradictions in the *Parmenides*. On

the one hand, it is the same One which is being discussed in both the first and the second 'hypotheses'; on the other hand, the two 'hypotheses' discuss this same One in two different *respects* (first only in relation to itself, and second in relation to the Others)–and, if the matter is put in this abstract way, the recent commentators, I think, say or are trying to say the same thing. The dialogue, then, demands disambiguation methods in order to resolve its unnecessary antinomies between positive hypotheses which overblend and negative hypotheses which underblend. Once the disambiguations have been performed, the result will be a very complicated, but also extremely informative, map of the world of Forms. And I propose that to know how the Forms are set up in all their relations of compatibility and incompatibility is also to know the Good that is their ultimate reason.

Section Three: The Method of the *Lysis*

I shall now attempt to show that at least one 'early' dialogue, the *Lysis*, presents us with an exception to this generalization as it exhibits a specimen of mature Platonic dialectic. Here we are all indebted to treatments by Szabó (see note 32). In its exploration of the nature or essence of friendship, this dialogue offers many paradoxes. But these–admittedly 'dialectical' in the ordinary sense or even in the enriched, Socratic sense–deductions of contradictions, incongruities, or consequences which the interlocutor is unwilling to assent to, can

also be viewed as 'dialectical' in the sense I have been attempting to exhibit. Is it the lover or the beloved who is the friend (two opposed terms denied separately in the argument and together in the final, aporetic statement (212d8–213c8))? Is it the good, the bad, the neither-good-nor-bad (or none of these in the final statement) who are friends? Is it the like, the unlike, or both, or neither? Or is it the neither-good-nor-bad who are both like and unlike each other and a good which—threatened by an approaching evil—they desire (214a3–220e5)? Or is friendship desire and does every desire carry with it a reciprocal, returned desire on the part of the one desired (a conclusion Lysis and Menexenus are most unwilling to assent to (221a7–222b2))? Or, in the concluding statement, none of the above (223b4–8), followed by the moral remark that though we still do not know what friendship is, we have become friends through the conversation. Or is friendship some combination of the above?

Even if the dialogue is taken to mean nothing but perplexity on the surface level, still there are denials of both members of pairs of opposed terms (subject of feeling/object of feeling, good/bad, like/unlike, desirer/desired) and finally of the complex synthesis involved in having the neither-good-nor-bad pursue the good because of the impingement of the unmitigatedly bad. Thus the method is the one I have been attempting to describe: the members of sets of opposed terms are asserted and then negated separately and together in an articulated speech which ranges through all the possibilities for conjunction and disjunction within the set. The net effect is, as in the *Sophist*, a disciplined examination of relationships

of compatibility and incompatibility among terms, and, as in the *Parmenides*, the assertion of both members of a pair of opposites falling under a single term (in the later dialogue, the One; in the earlier, Friendship.)

Section Four: Negative Theology and the Trinity

What happens after Plato resembles the simple triadic form that one sees in an Aristotelian genus with two differentiae. Originally, in Plato and perhaps in Parmenides and Heraclitus as well, the structure is not monofocal in a merely triadic way (one term qualified by two opposites under it, as we shall see in Pseudo-Dionysius and the Trinity), but polyfocal: many terms are examined in all their possible connections, and only then are the two opposed terms jointly asserted and/or denied. Even in Heraclitus and Parmenides, where there is only one general term ('God,' 'Being'), the term is approached in many different ways: Wisdom, Zeus, the child at play, Thunderbolt, Justice are different aliases of the ultimate principle in Heraclitus,[45] while Parmenidean Being appears in three different contexts and rejects three different pairs of opposed contraries, one for each situation. The method of the *Parmenides* is supposed to be generalizable beyond just the One

[45] Zeus (B32), Wisdom (B41), the child at play (B52), War (B53), Thunderbolt (B64), Justice (B80).

to Likeness, Difference, Sameness, etc., and it is therefore an impoverishment when all this wealth is reduced only to a single triadic structure or triadic method, as in those popular caricatures of Hegel, many inherited through Engels, which strip him down (see Findlay and Mueller on the insufficiency of the rote formula 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis,' far too simple for Hegel's helices).[46] The real advantage of displaying things in a triadic way, then, must lie in applicability not as a repeatedly stamped structure (which is what Hegel accuses Schelling of doing),[47] but in its 'inner' meaning, arising from the difference between the Parmenidean method and the Platonic; reality includes both members of a pair of contraries (the contradictoriness involved in what Hegel calls the 'Golgotha' of Absolute Spirit).[48] Yet this is not viewed as a terminal 'Socratic' paradox, forcing us to start over from scratch, but as a positive advantage, a sign that the inquiry is going well and should proceed. Thus triads can be taken either as rote or as significant, either as trivial or dangerous paradoxes or as genuine signs of the topmost level of inquiry. We are now in a position to examine the explicitly theological coincidences of opposites in Pseudo-Dionysius and the Trinity.

It is known that Pseudo-Dionysius' 'negative theology' (a

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[46] J.N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 72–74. See also Gustav E. Mueller, "The Hegel Legend of 'Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis,'" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958) 411–14, for a standard criticism of too-simple pictures of the dialectic. I thank Colin Harper for providing me with the Mueller reference.

[47] Hegel, *Lectures*, vol. III, p. 542.

[48] From the last chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 'Absolute Knowing,' A.V. Miller, tr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 493: Miller has 'Calvary.'

misnomer, at least for him, since his system is as much positive as it is negative) both asserts terms of a transcendent divine being (on the grounds that all created terms, even the most wretched, ugly, or even evil, must have originated in God and are thus to be viewed as in some sense expressive of the divine nature) and denies them (on the grounds that the transcendent as transcendent is in no way proportional to immanent entities). Thus contraries like 'good' and 'bad' are both asserted and denied of God as part of a systematic exploration of what it means to be a transcendent being: God is, from an immanent point of view, partly determinate (assertion) and partly indeterminate, a negative route. (Compare this with the wholly determinate nature of Plato's syncategorematic terms or of Aristotle's genera; the transcendent is now, with Pseudo-Dionysius, moving away from determinate intelligibility into an ever-receding infinite, like Proclus' interpretation of the One in the first 'hypothesis' as best expressed in silence.) Finally, after positive and negative have been asserted separately, there is a conjoining of them, expressed by the prefix *huper*; the divine both has and lacks any given determinacy, but—moreover and ultimately—dwells in a synthesis of the two that is, first, 'above' both (and thus is neither) and, second, inclusive of both, possessing both to the highest possible degree.[49] It is, let's imagine, 'divine' and 'scorpion' and neither and both–a set of predicates reminding

[49] See, for example, Herman Shapiro, ed., *Medieval Philosophy: Selected Readings from Augustine to Buridan* (New York: the Modern Library, 1964), p. 51: "All things that have no substantial being super-essentially exist in the Beautiful and the Good."

one exactly of the final statement in the second half of the *Parmenides*, where the One is both the assertion and the negation of both members of each pair of contraries. Yet Pseudo-Dionysius means logical contradiction no more than the dialogue does; his opposites, both contrary and contradictory, occur in different senses, one relating creatures to God and one exhibiting a God utterly transcendent of creatures. Still, this is not the method of the historical Parmenides either, where statements are proved by rejecting their contradictories, not by being asserted together with them.

Aquinas' version of the Trinity is different: it is presented as an attempt to explore internal determinations *within* the divine. But it does not yet go all the way to Hegel: no contrary Trinitarian determinations hold in one and the same sense. Let me undertake a sort of speculative reconstruction of what is at issue. Suppose that God is or has self-knowledge, is Aristotle's "thinking which is a thinking of thinking." Then the Father is God as thinker and the Son is God as the thing thought. God knows itself through seeing itself in its 'reflection' and in knowing its identity with this reflection. Aquinas is thus able to describe the first two persons of the Trinity as subsisting relations: God the Father is subsisting 'father of' and God the Son is subsisting 'son of.'[50] And this has ethical consequences: the Father is nothing but its total gift of itself, or of the divine essence, to the Son, and the Son is nothing but its total gift of

[50] St. Thomas Aquinas (Charles J. O'Neil, tr.) *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), Book Four ("Salvation"), Chapters 1–16, pp. 35–146.

itself back to the Father. (Total giving appears on the human level as charity.)

Thus the first two persons are different from each other; the two relations run in opposite directions. The thinker relates to the thought differently than the thought relates to the thinker. Yet in fact the two persons are also the same: the thinker is one with the thing known, it is itself that the divine thinks. Indeed, since the relations 'father of' and 'son of' run in different directions, both persons can give themselves completely to each other, a situation which makes both into one. The expression of this unity is the third person, the Spirit. It correlates and unifies the two relations, shows them to be one. It is thus a relation of relations, the unity between thinker and thing thought, the contemplator and its reflection, lover and beloved. The relation between the first relation ('father of') and the second ('son of') is that of unity.

Thus the Trinity is a *unity-in-difference.* The difference between Father and Son is that they are the opposites of each other in the stark negativity between thinker and thing thought; but because they are totally different, each can at the same time give itself totally to the other and become one with the other. The Father's difference from the Son is just that the Father is merely the gift of itself to the Son. The Son, likewise, is nothing but its gift of itself to the Father. Since they are different in this way, they must at the same time be one, since it is this kind of difference (total mutual giving in reciprocal directions) which makes them one. God is the same with itself precisely because it is different from itself, and vice versa. The Spirit, as relation of these relations, reveals God as the unity-in-difference of unity

and difference. And the divine nature does not subsist apart from this unity of giving and receiving. It is not something abstracted from the relations among persons, but is in those relations, is those relations, like a loaf of bread, or a piece of fish, scattered and yet miraculously whole.

God is God precisely because God is not God, and God is not God precisely because God is God. It is neither pure unity, nor absolute difference, but rather a non-contradictory finite number of persons mapped onto each other in relations and relations of relations, non-contradictory because the 'is' and 'is not' are taken in different respects. And this is very similar to the complicated interrelationships, both positive and negative, in Plato's intelligible world, where the Good, as relational pattern of relations, unifies that world in an evaluative way.

It is thus no accident that the Neoplatonic placing of the Platonic intelligibles in the Logos is taken up both by Philo and by much Christian metaphysics at least through Aquinas.[51] Moreover, the Trinitarian relations unify the persons in the same way that the increasing degrees of relational complexity in time, space, and the sphere unify Parmenidean Being, except that, as she must, the goddess cannot allow contraries to subsist either independently of each other or in mutual giving to each other. The Trinitarian contraries ('father of' and 'son of'), on the other hand, like the contrary terms in the second half of the *Parmenides*, are distinct–that is, both negated–only

[51] For the Neoplatonic reading of intelligibles in the Logos, see Lucas Siorvanis, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (New Haven: Yale, 1996), p. 21.

because they are one–that is, both affirmed. And the divine nature in the Trinity cannot know itself unless it is both different from and the same as itself by being both one and three—a determinate number, like the 'just how many' of the *Philebus* (18a6-b4). If more persons were required in order to hold the unity of the nature together, then there could be more in a kind of Neoplatonic or Hegelian descent. But in fact the Spirit, which completes and expresses the unification of the two contraries, is sufficient; it is their status with regard to each other, just as, in the case of the Parmenidean sphere, the double-negation completes the logic of time and space. The Trinity can be expressed by the Schellingean formula 'A equals A' (the Son is God as the Father is God), but also by the Fichtean formula 'A does not equal A' (the persons).

It seems to me also, though only as one who pretends not the slightest acquaintance with the relevant scholarship, that the Johannine tradition is fully dialectical in the relevant sense also. First, the 'Spirit of truth' in the Last Supper speech is from both Father and Son (16:14–16): it takes what is the Son's (*ek tou emou*) and announces it to the disciples, but we have already heard that it is from the Father (*para tou patros*) twice in 15:26. Now (in 6:15–16) we hear that everything (that is, the Spirit) which is the Father's is also the Son's, that is, that the Father gives to the Son the power of giving rise to the Spirit. Here, of course, there is no hard and fast Middle Platonic trinity (for example, in 17:17–18 the Word, as well as the Spirit, is Truth, but we know from the beginning of this Gospel that the Word is the Son). But, in the first Letter of John, one who has the Son has life (5:11–12) just as, in the

Gospel, believers have life in Jesus' name (20:31) and it is the Son which is the source of life (17:2–3, so that the Son might give eternal life to all those given him by the Father), a life consisting in acquaintance with both Son and Father (17:3–4). Here there is at least a hint that Son and Father collaborate in the giving of a 'life' which is distinct from both. And yet this life is also the relationship between Son and Father in a trinity of *patēr*, *logos*, *zōē*. And, one might ask, what would be the most appropriate temporal schematization of the fact that the Son's unity with the Father depends on their absolute difference, the total loss of each to the other and of each for the other? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) expresses, in its inexplicable horror and darkness, that total otherness of the divine from itself which is at the same time the divine's total gift of itself to itself and to creation in unity. In this agony we hear the cry of all human beings, confronted with the absolute loss of hope in the face of terror and of the obscenities of power. Time itself, and the subjection to death which is consequent on time, are the full expression of the otherness of Father and Son from each other. And the resurrection is the visible display of the unity thus guaranteed, the return of time and humanity, all now in the body of the Son, back to the Father in regained (and, in a sense, never lost) intimacy. The Son disappears entirely into loss, its negation from the Father, and is thus regained; in this sense cross and resurrection are one and the cross itself wears a rose, to adapt the old Rosicrucian metaphor Hegel uses at the end of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right.*

In this way even a descent into time would be appropriate

for a relational, self-thinking being; it would be a Trinity undergoing Incarnation and requiring universal salvation. And what the mystic sees is just this compresence of eternity and time, the full presence of a kingdom in every mote of dust. Or, to quote from the Buddhist tradition: "You do not have to die in order to enter the kingdom of God; in fact you are already in it now and here. The only thing is that you don't know that."[52] Our own unity in eternity was never lost. Or: ". . . the kingdom does not have to come and you do not have to go to it; it is already here."[53] Or, as the Islamic poet Rumi puts it: "We are tasting the taste this minute of eternity/ . . . we are the sweet cold water, and the jar that pours."[54] Or, as Nietzsche puts it from a quite different angle in his account of Jesus' message: "'Sin'—any distance separating God and man—is abolished; precisely this is the 'glad tidings.'"[55] These various statements are in profound accord with one another.

Section Five: Hegel

Hegel, who in the end also attempts to realize a unity of eternity and time, differs, though, from the Thomistic account,

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52 Thich Nhat Hanh, *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers* (New York: Riverhead Books/Penguin-Putnam, Inc., 1999), p. 155.
53 Ibid., p. 103.
54 Coleman Barks, tr., *The Essential Rumi* (Edison, New Jersey: Castle Books, 1997), p. 106.
55 *The Antichrist*, section 33, in Walter Kaufmann, ed. & tr., *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 606.

though he would be the first to admit that he is essentially a Trinitarian writer. For, in Aquinas, the three persons of the Trinity are all on the same level and are essentially expressions of one being's unity with itself, while in Hegel the Father stands to the Son as universal does to particular; filiation is seen as an ontological descent. It is also worth noting that the Christian coincidence of time and eternity is taken to be a contingent and partly symbolic matter, rather than a matter that can be exhausted by dialectical reason; in orthodoxy the return of creatures to God has already begun, but has not been fully completed.

Nevertheless, with the cautionary note I raised above, let us take a typically Hegelian approach to be a triadic one. An in principle unknowable "in-itself" (the Father in the Trinity) comes to reflect on itself, to think about itself, and so comes to see itself, or a determinate version of itself, its 'negation' in a sense, in the mirror of this reflection (the Son, the "for-itself.") Much of this is traditional trinitarian theology plus the maxim that all determination is negation. States of determinate reality, like the for-itself, do not become intelligibly determinate unless they are circumscribed and marked off from other determinate states and from the undetermined by negation-inviting relations. Thus, in a sense, what the undetermined in-itself contemplates in its expression, the for-itself, is just itself; in another sense, however, the for-itself (the determinate image or Son) is the negation of the in-itself, since it is distinct from its indefinite parent and since, unlike that parent, it is not formless but rather a determinate form. (Pseudo-Dionysius, as we saw, expressed the same distinction by distinguishing the

negative route, which expresses God as transcending determinacy, from the positive, which expresses the origin of the determinate from the indeterminate.) The relationship between the two persons is expressed in Hegelian terminology by the phrase 'in-and-for-itself,' the relationship between position and negation in a unity which negates both and includes both, the same unity expressed by the Pseudo-Dionysian prefix *huper*. In Thomistic language, Father (as relation in one direction to the Son) and Son (the relation in the opposite direction to the Father) are two relations which are themselves related to each other. Each negates the other in a meta-relation of which the Spirit, as unity, is both the positive and the doubly-negative expression. Finally, in Parmenidean terms, though indeterminacy is rejected as characteristic of merely mortal thought as opposed to the determinate sphere, one does not understand the full statement of the goddess unless one has gone with her through denials, their negations in affirmations, and then double-negations in different contexts. She admittedly therefore produces only identities, but the negation of the negative side (for Aquinas, the negation of the difference between Father and Son) is just as important in her method as the affirmation of the positive side. Thus we find dialectical negation, position, and double-negation in Parmenides, Plato's *Parmenides*, the Trinity, and Hegel. Hegel (rather uncritically) sees his own idea in Plato and later: I have tried to make clear what the differences are. Even as late as the Trinity, not to mention Plato and the Neoplatonic tradition, there are still differences of respect among these triadic fragments of a larger method, not to mention considerable differences between

the *Parmenides* and the Trinity. And Hegel was apparently ignorant of the Eleatic influence on Platonic method. One is, I think, entitled now to speak of the method of the historical Parmenides as a properly dialectical one and as the ancestor of these successively different later developments in quite determinate ways. In all of these systems the Devil is so very clever that in the end he checkmates even himself. What is distinctive about the Platonic possibility (as distinct from the 'Socratic' one) is that the necessary positions and negations involved in intelligibility are 'springboards' on a hierarchical ladder which rationally locates an ethical principle. The following table is an attempt to capture the connections I am asserting to hold here:

AUTHOR	MODE 1	MODE 2	MODE 3
Parmenides	Time	Space	Sphere
Plato	'Hypotheses' 1, 4, 6, 8	'Hypotheses' 2, 3, 5, 7	Conclusion
Trinity	Father	Son	Spirit
Hegel	In-Itself	For-Itself	In- & For-Itself
Derrida	Difference		

After Hegel: if Parmenides is a philosopher of identity, then surely Hegel is, as has been claimed, a philosopher of the identity of identity and difference. It will remain for certain movements in contemporary continental philosophy to supply a philosophy of mere difference, of the unmediated Other, and thus to complete the movement down the Platonic Divided

Line from the Good (Identity) through the hierarchy of intelligibles (Identity and Difference) to mere imitation.

Negations and contradictions, tamed in the service of identity by Parmenides' goddess, gradually emerge from the bounds of Being as we move through the non-identities in Plato and the Trinity, until they emerge in Hegel as the equals of positives and then in certain post–Hegelian reflections as all there is–or all that becomes, a gignomenontology, to coin an ugly word for a bad thing. What is left in the end is just a flux of signs which, deprived of referential power, signify only each other, only other signs. This is, as I said in the second essay, very different from enriched medieval symbols like the Eucharist, which imports along with itself the reality that it signifies. In Parmenides, and for Jesus as Nietzsche describes him, the signs or 'signposts' had led to an eternal plenitude of bliss, of Being outside the sensible world. The tradition then moves the signs down the Divided Line in the manner just described until, with Derrida, we are at the level of a mere shadow-play where the mat of signs is woven so tightly that nothing escapes it, where the necks of the imprisoned and encaved human beings never turn from the wall which they face. In Parmenides, on the contrary, even the road-markers, not to mention youth and declarative goddess, are absorbed into the unity of Being, as Plato complains in the *Sophist*. And so the tradition bears us from pure identity/eternity/positivity to pure otherness/time/negativity, with the mixture of these two poles in Hegel and Aquinas betokening an incarnation of eternity into time, a redemption of time back into unity.

One cannot deny the rationality of the ethical (relativism is this denial) without first trying to work out Plato's method in concrete conversations; on the other hand, one cannot merely *insist* that there is truth in ethical matters (or, for that matter, any truth) without going through the long journey necessary in order to make out the claim. The contemporary paradox is Nietzsche's (the conscientious pursuit of truth leads to the paradox that the assumptions underlying that very pursuit are unprovable by the methods one uses to satisfy one's conscience)–or, in Platonic terms, which are also terms invited by certain twentieth-century paradoxes, no closed axiomatic-deductive system can justify its own premises. Dialectic, as I have attempted to describe it here, was Plato's answer, if I have done my job. Two popular contemporary views–(a) that truth has been left behind in favor of relativism, dissolution of metaphors and signifiers, economics, or sociology, or (b) stated quite without proof, that what does not adhere to a stripped-down traditional notion of truth is somehow 'not philosophy'–are pre-Nietzschian views, less than probing in their attempt to face squarely what Plato's methodologically careful, Eleatically inspired answer really was and how it has determined subsequent Western navigation of routes to the ultimate. Only then can the question of the difference between European and non-European 'ways' be properly answered.

But Parmenides' own answer was simpler, more practical, and perhaps still viable as it leaps over much of contemporary philosophy. For him, not the signs, but the transcendent, is all there is, and there is no separation between it and language, between subject and object, between or among moments of

passing time, or even between different persons or points of view. And yet it is concrete, and lives in the moment in which we live. Being is complete at all moments, since it is always 'now' at every moment, at every 'now,' and there is no other moment, no other 'now,' than the 'now' that we are in. You are also this Being, not the little 'you' which is born and dies, which changes place and has protuberances and indentations, but the big 'You' which "neither waxes nor wanes" (*Symposium* 211a1–2) and is an eternal "ring of endless light."[56] There is no separation between us and Being, no past to outgrow or future to worry about, nothing to regret or fear, no distance, fallenness, or guilt to overcome. And there is only the 'now' in which we and Being are one–nothing else, nothing lost or still to arrive, no manifold of words about growing and changing and destroying, since all such manifolds only point to the one Being and are swallowed up in its perfect wholeness. All is full, calm, perfect, and always *is* in the 'now' which never goes away.

The role of the Parmenidean poem is simply to inform us mortals of the fact that we are already immortals. But that the poem does this dialectically is what distinguishes it from a pure mysticism of love as, for better or for worse, it initiates the European rationalist tradition. And perhaps, if we have now finally come to the end of this tradition, we can at least be refreshed by a drink from its source.

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[56] From Henry Vaughan, "The World."

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